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October 7, 1974

Dr. Anne R. Somers
Office of Consumer Health Education
College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey
Rutgers Medical School
University Heights
Piscataway, New Jersey 08854

Source of health

Dear Dr. Somers,

I was glad to learn of the project outline in your letter of September 30th, and I want to thank you for thinking of me. Yes, the subject is one that is close to my heart; but no, I am afraid that I just do not have enough time left over to be able to contemplate the assignment. However, I hope that you can find some way to keep me informed of your progress and perhaps give me an opportunity to comment on some aspects of it.

Indeed I wonder if I could make a counter-proposition although this is just off the top of my head and I will not have had a chance to clear it with some of the other people I am about to mention. But the proposal is simply that you reschedule one of your meetings to hold it here at Stanford, perhaps at the Center for Advanced Studies in Behavioral Sciences. I am sure Nathan Maccoby will not complain about that. But what I had in mind besides the possibility of my own participation as an observer is that Bob Haggerty and Dave Mechanic are both here at the Center and I need hardly mention the kind of contribution they might be in a position to make. And it is difficult for me to believe that they would not share my enthusiasm about that kind of involvement. Besides the names that came first to mind there are of course many others in the immediate area who might be drawn upon as important resources. I have taken part in meetings of this kind before at the Center, and they have always been regarded as most constructive. (The outstanding example, not to be homologized with your very valuable activity, was one where - believe it or not - it was decided to abandon a project as inherently unfeasible on the basis of commentary to that effect by the observers. In that case it was a well deserved fate!)

I really am just delighted to see that this kind of initiative is being taken to reassess the status and substance of preventive medicine. I would in fact be most interested to learn a little more about its general organization - for example, what attention is being paid to genetic factors as input variables.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr